

# St Thomas Allotment Association



## draft MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEETING 9 2020/21 : Sun. May 23rd 2021

(zoom online meeting by invitation)

5:00pm online

1. **Attendance:** 🍏 **A** Present [quorum pres.]: **Executive/Officers:** Alison Walker (Chair & pro-tem lead for G&H Trading Shed & Site Mngr/Rep vacancies) | David Solman (Sec. & pro-tem lead for the Treasurer vacancy) | Angela R. (Vice-chair & Local Allotment Mngr, Regent St. & mtg host) | Charles Knill (Trading Manger) | **Local Allotment Managers:** Richard Brownbridge (Clapperbrook) | John Butler (Cowick La.) | Rob Shields (Rackfields) | Bill Turner (Ashwood Rd.) | Claire Richards (Local Allotment Manager, Pinces) | 🍏 **B** **Apologies:** Heidi Miller (Local Allotment Manager, Guys&Hylton) | Ruth O'Neale (Web&Data Manager) | 🍏 **C** **Absent:** Tim Snell (Local Allotment Mngr, Newman Rd.), Rob Harding (Local Allotment Manager, Ide La.).
2. **Approval of previous minutes** - deferred.
3. **Matters arising & AoB:** Committee members discussed how to improve the management of Association business at Guys&Hylton allotments and support volunteers there. There were two main issues causing difficulty (i) ongoing behavioural problems (bullying/harassment) by some tenants, which was upsetting staff and volunteers and of great concern to the committee; and (ii) little interest amongst tenants in volunteering (so the workload for Alison W. & Heidi M. is now too great, especially since both work full-time). At the G&H Tshed, Gerald T. has volunteered to cover the Wednesdays, reporting to Alison; she will aim to be present on Saturday mornings and will see how much her volunteers can support this. Some closure periods might occur.

*Noted (i). That the TShed at G&H will now be open only on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, not also on Sundays. There may be a need to shut the TShed altogether, some weeks.*

*Noted (ii) that Heidi.M. is resigning from the cttee as G&H Site Rep., but will continue to carry-out Let&Check as a volunteer, working to either the Secretary or Chair.*

4. **OPERATIONAL MODEL DISCUSSION** - Angela R. led the discussion and began by noting that background work on three of the many possible organisational structures, had already been circulated:
  - (i) an Unincorporated Membership Association;
  - (ii) a Registered Charity (the Charitable Incorporated Organisation variety);
  - (iii) a private company (the Community Interest Company variety)

**QUESTION ONE: How many alternative 'operational models' do we want to consider for the association's future ?** Angela asked whether any committee member wished to consider an organisational model, other than the above three. No further models were put forward for consideration.

At Claire R's suggestion, the the Committee diverted slightly to explore the imbalance between the allotment sites, both in the time we devote to them at committee level, and in the services they provide. In conclusion, Angela R. recommended that at a future meeting the committee should look further into this mater and, specifically, at whether a mini trading shed facility should/could be developed for Pinces.

**RESOLVED (i) The Committee will consider three possible Organisational Models for its future: (i) continuing as an unincorporated membership association and improving the way this operates; (ii)**

*setting-up a registered charity of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation variety; & (iii) setting-up a private company of the Community Interest Company variety.*

**QUESTION TWO: What format should we use for Consultation on Organisational Models ?** Angela asked

whether the committee wished to circulate plot-holders and members with the papers they had already drafted - or to work these up into a common format, and then pull them together as one paper with like-for-like questions and answers displayed side-by-side.

Alison W. commended the later option; it would, she thought, be easier for people to compare options. She suggested hyper-links be added to allow further research or papers to be made available to readers.

Bill T. explained that he didn't favour circulating detailed organisational options to all the plot-holders and members. He noted our recent experience of consulting on updating the membership list - that despite using all the available means to consult plot-holders and members -perhaps 675 people in total - only 13 people had sent comments back to us. He had concluded that, overwhelmingly, people feel they elected us to manage the association - so we need to make a clear recommendation, then ask them for approval. Rob S. agreed.

John B. proposed a different view; he had already displayed working drafts for two of the options committee members were thinking about, on his Cowick notice-board. He asked if we should be setting a date for a meeting such as an AGM and working back from there to develop a timeline for consultation.

Angela R. reminded everyone about the considerable time the committee had spent answering letters from two plot-holders at Cowick La letters who sent us lots of questions about the work of the committee; following this she felt we needed to fully advertise any options for the better management of the association whilst we are looking into them. Claire R. agreed with Angela, that we must inform plot-holders about all the options under consideration.

Rob S. summed-up for the alternative view, based on the low level of interest we have in our consultations; and overall a way forwards was then agreed.

*Resolved (2) The Secretary and John B. to liaise, to work-up the existing 2 papers and 1 note, into a common format, then pull them together as one paper - using like-for-like questions and answers displayed side-by-side for each option. This comparative paper to be circulated in June to all committee members for comments, additions, corrections etc. If then approved by the committee, it is to be circulated to plot-holders and members as a basis for consultation on the association's preferred organisational model.*

*Resolved (3): The committee will aim for an EGM or similar in September, at Cowick Church Hall - so plot-holders and/or members can meet to fully examine options and aim to take forward a preferred organisational option for the future of the association - key arrangements are delegated to Angela R. The following AGM or similar, could be asked to comment on, agree, or amend a proposed draft application if it was the decision of the EGM to prepare one.*

5. **Finance/approvals** - deferred | 6. **AoB** - exchange of information about progress on giving-out thank-you vouchers to volunteers & insuring them | 7. **Date of next Mtg.** - deferred.

**David Solman, Secretary @ staacommittee@yahoo.com**

Cttee. signed: *AS* .....

Dated: *31/7/21* .....